

Chapter 10

Grade Six – World History and Geography: Ancient Civilizations

Global Overview: Early Beginnings to 300 CE

- How did the environment influence human migration, ancient ways of life, and the development of societies?
- What were the early human ways of life and how did they change over time? (hunting and gathering, agriculture, civilizations, urban societies, states, and empires)
- How did the major religious and philosophical systems (Judaism, Greek thought, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism) support individuals, rulers, and societies?
- How did societies interact with each other? How did connections between societies increase over time?

Students in sixth-grade world history and geography classrooms learn about the lives of the earliest humans, the development of tools, the foraging way of life, agriculture, and the emergence of civilizations in Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus River valley, China, Mesoamerica, and the Mediterranean basin. Although teachers should keep the focus on ancient events and problems, this course gives students the opportunity to grapple with geography, environmental issues, political systems and power structures, and civic engagement with fundamental ideas about citizenship, freedom, morality, and law, which also exist in the

modern world. Students practice history as an interpretative discipline. They read written primary sources, investigate visual primary sources, and learn how to analyze multiple points of view, cite evidence from sources, and make claims based on that evidence in writing and speaking.

Although most of the sixth-grade standards are organized regionally, there are patterns which the teacher uses to connect the regional studies into a world history. These are:

- The movement of early humans across continents, the political, economic, and social reasons for these movements, and their adaptations to the geography and climate of new regions.
- The rise of diverse civilizations, characterized by economies of surplus, centralized states, social hierarchies, cities, networks of trade, art and architecture, and systems of writing.
- The growth of urban societies and changes in societies (social class divisions, slavery, divisions of labor between men and women).
- The development of new political institutions (monarchy, empire, democracy) and new ideas (citizenship, freedom, morality, law).
- The birth and spread of religious and philosophical systems (Judaism, Greek thought, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism) which responded to human needs and supported social norms and power structures.
- The development and growth of links between societies through trade, diplomacy, migration, conquest, and the diffusion of goods and ideas.

The first section below outlines the development of these themes throughout the world over time. It is divided into three chronological periods: Beginnings to 4000 BCE; 4000-1000 BCE: Kingdoms and Innovations; and 1000 BCE-300 CE: An Age of Empires and Interactions. The second section outlines the development of these themes following the regional structure of the existing 6th-grade standards.

Beginnings to 4000 BCE

Modern humans, *Homo Sapiens*, are members of the Great Ape family. About 25 million years ago a medium-sized primate group split into apes and monkeys; both groups found an ecological niche in trees. Apes didn't have tails, relied primarily on their arms for locomotion by swinging in trees (as opposed to monkeys who primarily used four legs for travel). Apes developed a keener sense of vision; monkeys developed a better sense of smell. Subsequently, the ape family branched into two major lines—hominins and what we now usually call apes. The ape strand led to the present day chimpanzees, bonobos, and gorillas.

Our early ancestors, the hominins, and chimpanzees, our closest non-hominin relative, appeared about 6 million years ago. Both were partially bipedal. By 2.5 million years ago, these early hominins had evolved to walking upright. After passing through the australopithecine (southern ape) stage, the hominins eventually gave rise to our genus *Homo* (our first human-like ancestors), which initially appeared about 2.5 million years ago in Africa. The brains of this new genus were about the same size as chimpanzees but grew

steadily through the next million years. There were several species of these early homo lines whose population began to grow, though very gradually, after they began to make use of tools more extensively. Our early human ancestors evolved larger brains in response to the survival needs of hunting and gathering in small bands, employed rudimentary stone tools for skinning animals and weapons (such as spear heads and knives), developed simple clothing and shelter, and used fire opportunistically. Pair-bonding, which allowed for more extensive for child rearing, contributed to survival success.

There are various theories of how these hominins evolved. Most scholars suggest that the continued growth of brain size necessitated larger food intake. About 2 million years ago, a few of our early human ancestors migrated out of their east African homeland to the rest of that continent and subsequently spread throughout the world --to Europe, and as far east as Indonesia and China. The various species of the homo line continued to evolve and eventually became the more modern *Homo erectus*, *Neanderthals*, and *Denisovans*. Using archeological evidence, such as the carbon dating of bones, stone tools and weapons, DNA evidence of matrilineal and patrilineal descent, the examination of food remains and campsites, students can consider, **How do we know about these early proto-humans? Why did they succeed in replacing other Hominin lines?**

Around 200,000 years ago our direct human ancestors appeared, modern *Homo sapiens* (the wise man), who were anatomically the same as modern humans. At that time there was nothing particularly special about our species compared to the other homo species. We co-existed with several other homo

lines who also possessed similar brain sizes, walked upright, used fire, ate a variety of foods, were skilled gatherers, progressed from scavengers to hunters of large animals, and used comparable tools. However, *Homo sapiens* were lighter, less muscled, more adaptable, and kept developing larger brains.

About 70,000 years ago *Homo sapiens* began a major transformation. The species underwent a cognitive revolution which allowed us to acquire sophisticated language, the ability to abstract, imagine, and plan, and to develop the social skills and myth-making capacity required for group cohesion. These talents permitted *homo sapiens* to develop more sophisticated tools and inventions, learn from one another and pass technical, cultural, and organizational knowledge from one generation to the next. *Homo sapiens* also began to act collectively in large groups for foraging, hunting, and defense. These talents allowed our species to learn from experience and adapt more easily to a changing conditions. Consequently, modern humans were able to survive the varied and extreme climates found on this planet.

Under one highly regarded explanation, the climate worsened around 160,000 years ago, leaving much of African uninhabitable. The numbers of our immediate ancestors declined precipitously and some sought refuge on the southern coast where they learned to exploit the rich shell food beds for food. Unlike territory with scattered resources, territory that featured dense collections of resources required a stationary home base and defense against others. These ancestors evolved a genetically encoded prosocial proclivity, the ability to use sophisticated language and symbols, more advanced conceptual and cognitive

capacities, and social lifestyle shifts to encourage sophisticated innovation and cooperation with unrelated individuals. These traits allowed them to better exploit and defend their resource-rich territories against invaders. With their increased brains and ability to cooperate they became even more inventive. Their development of projectile weaponry, especially when coated with poison, was a revolutionary innovation that allowed for safer hunting. (Neanderthals never discovered bows and arrows and many were killed getting too close large animals in the hunt).

The story of how our now fully human ancestors populated the earth starting around 70,000 years ago is fascinating. Although the general narrative is generally understood, some details are known, some controversial, and some yet to be discovered. Students can consider the impact of population pressure, the availability of untapped hunting grounds, warfare, or even a sense of adventure as they consider the evidence for the migration and various routes taken. **Why did modern humans leave Africa? What happened to all the other Hominids in Africa, or the Neanderthals who had evolved from earlier humans in Europe? How did modern humans travel across the hemispheres? How violent or aggressive were these early humans?** In their investigations, students can consider the fact that as the modern humans peopled the world, the other lines became extinct. They can consider how modern humans from Indonesia crossed land bridges and developed the sea-faring technology to settle the continent of Australia more than 40,000 years ago. And students can [use cost-benefit analysis to](#) develop their own explanations for how 14,000 years [ago](#)

our species had populated both North and South America and had peopled every continent except Antarctica (although some islands such as New Zealand and Hawaii were not inhabited until much later).

In all these places people survived by foraging, hunting, and fishing, and they lived in bands, that is, communities typically numbering no more than a few dozen men, women, and children. World population of our species began to rise but very gradually. Often, these bands were loosely associated with larger groups, such as tribes who had a common language and belief systems. For example, when the British conquered Australia in the eighteenth century, they found 300,000 to 700,000 hunter-gatherers organized into between 200-600 tribes (further divided into multiple bands) each with its own language, customs, norms, and belief systems.

Around 10,000 years ago, some humans began to domesticate plants and animals and experiment with farming. Others learned to mine for desired metals and precious stones after smelting was discovered. Their activities led to the development of new ways of life: agriculture in settled villages, trade, and pastoral nomadism. Students investigate why these radical changes began to occur after humans had lived exclusively as gatherers and hunters and still managed to adapt successfully to many climates and climatic changes over hundreds of thousands of years. **Why did some humans start to plant and harvest crops, live in crowded villages, and later build cities, accept the rule of monarchs, and pay taxes? Why did the pace of historical change in certain parts of the world begin to speed up?**

During this period many technological and social discoveries or inventions occurred building on the previous breakthroughs, such as use of fire, cooking, boats, use of tools for hunting, defense, and daily life, and tools to make tools, language, expressions of emotions, the ability to understand what another person was thinking, planning, pair-bonding, cooperation, bands and tribes, clothing, sewing, containers, and art, including pigmentation, music and dance. The new innovations included domestication of animals and farming, smelting of copper, then bronze, then iron, the plough, twisted rope, musical instruments, beer and wine, religion and ancestor worship, more complex boats, and trade allowed for an increasing population and standard of living. Working in small groups, students can explore the impact of these discoveries and innovations by examining one discovery or invention in-depth to develop and present a short oral presentation that both explains the innovation and speculates as to its overall significance.

4000-1000 BCE: Kingdoms and Innovations

At the beginning of the period between 4000 and 1000 BCE, the earliest complex urban societies, or civilizations, rose. By the end of this period, there were many urban societies, and their interaction had accelerated. During those three millennia, numerous technical and intellectual innovations appeared, especially in the dense agricultural societies that arose in the Middle East (notably Mesopotamia, Syria, Anatolia, and Persia), the Nile Valley of Africa, northern India, China, and the lands around the Aegean Sea. By about 2000 BCE, urban societies also began to emerge in the Americas, starting with the

182 Olmec civilization in Mesoamerica and Chavín in South America. Many
183 inventions and ideas fundamental to modern life appeared, including the wheel,
184 writing, more complex metallurgy, codes of law, mathematics, and astronomy.
185 While cities grew in some areas, hunter-gatherers and village farmers remained
186 in other areas. Increased trade occurred. Global population rose at a faster rate
187 than it had before 4000 BCE.

188 Powerful people (warlords) took control of the tribes in larger areas and
189 eventually the strongest warlords formed states or city-states with governments
190 headed by kings or, very occasionally, queens, often claiming authority from
191 gods and passing on power to their own descendants. Supported by political
192 elites (nobles, officials, warriors) and priests, these monarchs imposed taxes on
193 ordinary city dwellers and rural people to pay for bureaucracies, armies, irrigation
194 works, and monumental architecture. Writing systems were first invented to serve
195 governments, religions, and merchants, and later became means of transmitting
196 religious, scientific, and literary ideas. Some of the religions of this era, such as
197 early Hinduism and Judaism, set the stage for later world belief systems.

198 Migrations continued as farming peoples slowly expanded into tropical Africa
199 and Southeast Asia, North and South America, and the temperate woodlands of
200 Europe. In the steppes of Central Asia, a new way of life and type of society
201 emerged after 4000 BCE. There, communities lived by herding domesticated
202 animals, such as sheep, cattle, or horses. Their economy, called pastoral
203 nomadism, permitted humans to adapt in larger numbers to climates which were
204 too dry for farming. Pastoral nomads lived mainly on the products of their

livestock. They grazed herds over vast areas and came regularly in contact with urban societies, often to trade, sometimes to make war. By the end of this period, urban societies ruled by monarchies had greatly expanded their control over agricultural regions, but many people still lived in small village, pastoral nomad, and hunter-gatherer societies.

1000 BCE-300 CE: An Age of Empires and Interchange

During these 1,300 years, many patterns of change established in the previous era continued, but at a faster pace. The number of cities multiplied, and states appeared in new forms that were bigger, more complex, and more efficient at coercing people and extracting taxes from them. A new form of state developed – the empire. Among the largest states of that era were the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires centered in Mesopotamia, the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sasanian Empires in Persia, the Kushan Empire in Central Asia, the Maurya Empire in India, and the kingdom of Kush in the upper Nile River valley. The largest of all were the Roman Empire, which came to embrace the entire Mediterranean Sea region and much of Europe, and the Han Empire in China. At the dawn of the first millennium CE, these two states together ruled a small part of the earth's land area, but roughly one-half of the world's population.

A second key development of that era was the establishment of a thicker web of interregional communication and transport, which allowed goods, technologies, and ideas to move long distances. Interlocking networks of roads, such as the Silk Road, and sea lanes in the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean

Sea, connected empires, kingdoms, and regions of the Eastern Hemisphere with one another. Merchants and other travelers created similar interconnections in Mesoamerica and along South America's Andean mountain spine. Merchants traveled long distances in caravans and ships to connect farming and urban societies that lay along the rims of seas, deserts, and steppes. In this period, the religions of Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, and Christianity and the philosophies of Confucianism and Greek thought emerged and spread within empires and along trade routes. These religious and philosophical systems changed as they developed, in order to address human needs, support social order, and adapt to different societies.

The introduction of money (coins) around the 6th or 5th century BCE facilitated trade. Coins probably originated in Lydia but there is some dispute. The concept of metal money quickly spread through the ancient world, making its way to Greece, Egypt, Persia, Phoenicia, Carthage, India, China and Rome.

The following section discusses the development of the above themes following the existing sixth-grade standards. Teachers use the guiding questions to focus on course themes and draw comparisons with other regional units.

Early Humankind and the Development of Human Societies

- How did the environment influence the migrations of early humans? How did early humans adapt to new environments and climate changes?
- How did people live by the gathering and hunting way of life?

- Why did some people develop agriculture and pastoral nomadism? What were the effects of these new ways of life?

In the first unit, students learn about the emergence and migrations of early humans, the gathering and hunting way of life, and the emergence of village agriculture and pastoral nomadism. To frame the topic of the emergence and migrations of early humans, the teacher uses these questions: **How did the environment influence the migrations of early humans? How did early humans adapt to new environments and climate changes?** For millions of years, the genetic ancestors of humans, known as hominins (or hominids), used stone tools and lived on foods found by gathering and hunting. Archeological evidence shows students that our earliest forebears evolved in eastern Africa and that small bands of those ancestors migrated into Eurasia about 1.9 million years ago, driven by population gains and increased competition for food. Around 800,000 years ago, early humans discovered how to control fire, allowing them to cook food, keep away predators, and burn areas of land in order to flush out game.

Homo sapiens, that is, anatomically modern humans, evolved in Africa around 200,000 years ago. Modern humans adapted well to new environments, developing increasingly diverse stone and bone tools for collecting and processing food. About 100,000 years ago, our species developed the capacity for language, which accelerated technological change. Spoken language and the evolution of pro-social mental and social structures enabled humans to teach

complex skills to each other, cooperate with others, pass down ideas to the next generation, and talk about their world and the cosmos.

After leaving Africa 90,000 to 100,000 years ago, humans may have reached Australia 60,000 or more years ago and Europe 40,000 years ago. In the Middle East and Europe, humans encountered Neanderthals, a related hominid species, who became extinct about 28,000 years ago. Early humans reached the Americas from Eurasia at least 12,000 years ago, possibly earlier. Students use maps to identify the patterns of early human migration and settlement which populated the major regions of the world. Reading climate zone maps and studying climate change during the Pleistocene (glacial and interglacial periods) helps students develop an understanding of the effects of climate on the Earth and on the expansion of human settlements. In California EEI Curriculum Unit 6.1.1, “Paleolithic People: Tools, Tasks and Fire,” students analyze why humans chose certain migration routes, settled in particular locations, developed lifestyles, cultures, and methods to extract, harvest, and consume natural resources to understand how early humans adapted to the natural systems and environmental cycles in different regions, and how these factors influence the settlement of human communities. Students analyze how human migrants might adapt to a colder or hotter climate, growth of human population, competition with another hominid species, floods, or droughts.

Although humans made many adaptations to the conditions of their environments, until about 10,000 years ago, they all lived by the same way of life, hunting and gathering. The teacher introduces the first of the ways of life

students will study in this course with this framing question: **How did people live by the gathering and hunting way of life?** There was a division of labor between women and men, but they contributed equally to supporting the band. Adult men were more likely to travel away from the camp to forage or hunt, while women, who were likely to be pregnant or have small children to care for, collected edible plants and trapped small animals close to home. Because gatherers and hunters need a large area to support themselves, bands were small. Social cooperation was very important, but there were few social differences between people.

To understand the gathering and hunting way of life and appreciate the linguistic and cognitive advantages of *Homo sapiens*, students analyze primary sources from this long time period before written language. Our knowledge of this era depends on evidence from material remains, especially from bones and stone tools, and, more recently, from research on human DNA and long-term climatic and geological change. Students can analyze cave paintings from Chauvet, Lascaux, and Altamira, with pairs of students first answering a descriptive question, such as: **What colors did the artist use? What kinds of animals are shown in the painting?** and then making an interpretation about: **What was important to hunter-gatherer people? Why do you think the artist painted this?** Student pairs can then share their interpretations, claims, and evidence with the whole class. Students use academic language to articulate their observations and interpretations to another student and the whole class, supporting the development of oral discourse ability. Students investigate the

dramatic changes that took place when some humans began to domesticate plants and animals and settle in one place year round, with these questions: **Why did some people develop agriculture and pastoral nomadism? What were the effects of these new ways of life?** Teachers begin by asking students why a gatherer might start planting seeds. **How might a hunter start to tame an animal?** Archaeological evidence indicates that in the Middle East, and probably Egypt, foraging bands settled near stands of edible grasses, the genetic ancestors of wheat and other grains. People began deliberately to sow plants that had favorable qualities, for example, varieties that were large, tasty, and easy to cook. In this way, they gradually domesticated those plants. Domesticated plants and animals became increasingly important to human diets regionally and turned people into farmers, that is, *producers* of food rather than simply *collectors* of it.

This huge change introduced a new way of life for humans – village agriculture. They could therefore live in larger settlements and accumulate more material goods than when they foraged for a living. Teachers emphasize that agriculture involved not only the act of farming but also a whole new way of life based on food production. Improved production meant that not everyone in a village had to spend all of their time securing the food supply. Food surplus also invited conflict with neighboring tribes eager to expand their own reserves.

Another result of village agriculture is the development of tools. Early farmers gradually developed more varied stone tools, such as sickles to cut grain and grinding stones to make flour. They used fire to transform clay into durable

pottery. They wove wool, cotton, and linen into textiles. Because the early millennia of agriculture involved more sophisticated stone tools, it is known as the Neolithic, or New Stone Age.

One of the major effects of the village agricultural way of life was an increase in social differences. In early villages adult men and women probably worked together to perform many necessary tasks and treated each other with near equality. Because villages likely included several extended families living closely together, however, leaders inevitably emerged to guide group decisions and settle personal conflicts. Also, as soon as some families accumulated more stored food than did others and appointed guards to protect their wealth, the conditions for social inequality appeared. Teachers may ask students to examine differences in the contents of graves that archaeologists have excavated—some graves having jewelry, shells, or other fine materials and some having none of these things—for evidence about social ranking and inequality in early agricultural communities.

Agriculture developed independently in different areas of the world between 12,000 and 5,000 years ago and gradually spread outward from those areas. Students should compare physical and environmental maps with maps of the first sites of food production to make interpretations.

In some areas of the world, such as the steppes of Central Asia, the climate was unfavorable for farming, but ideal for supporting herds of domesticated animals, such as sheep, cattle, or horses. In these areas, some people created a new way of life based on the products of their livestock. They were nomadic and

did not settle in villages. In fact, they were highly mobile, and often came into contact with settled societies, often to trade and sometimes to attack and conquer. By 4000 BCE there were three ways of life followed by humans – gathering and hunting, village agriculture, and pastoral nomadism.

The Early Civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Kush

- How did civilizations, complex urban societies, develop in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Kush?
- What environmental factors helped civilizations grow? What impact did civilizations and complex urban societies have on the surrounding environment?
- How did people's lives change as states and empires took over these areas (increase in social differences, rule by monarchs, laws)?
- From 4000 BCE to 500 BCE, how did contact, trade, and other links grow among the urban societies of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Kush, India, and the eastern Mediterranean?

Between 10,000 and 4,000 BCE, farming spread widely across Africa and Eurasia. In the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates (Fertile Crescent) and Nile rivers, people adapted to the rivers' flood cycles and the related seasonal cycles of plants and animals. Their adaptations allowed them to produce a surplus of food, which led to other changes in their cultures. Students learn that people who lived near the banks of those rivers began to use irrigation techniques to control water and extend farming, despite an increasingly arid climate. A similar process

got under way in the Indus River valley in India and in the Huang He (Yellow) River valley in northern China some centuries later. To frame the study of the emergence of civilizations, the teacher uses the question: **How did civilizations, complex urban societies, develop in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Kush?** When communities began to intensify farming with new techniques, they were able to produce surplus food. Early farmers increased the size of their farms and used more resources in order to increase their yield. Focusing on the relationships between resource requirements, agricultural production, and population growth, students learn that the population growth near agricultural areas was a first step in the development of larger settlements and cities. The surpluses they produced led to the rise of more complex social, economic, and political systems in those valleys.

The civilization of Mesopotamia, located in the valley of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers (modern Iraq and part of Syria), and Egypt, which stretched along the Nile River, both arose in the fourth millennium BCE. Kush, a civilization in the upper Nile River region south of Egypt emerged in the second millennium BCE.

[Entrepreneurship developed during the rule of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon and Cyrus in Persia, leading to significant improvements in people's standard of living. I](#)

Teachers introduce students to the environmental roots of civilization with this question: **What environmental factors helped civilizations grow? What impact did civilizations and complex urban societies have on the surrounding environment?** All these societies depended on their river locations to build dense agricultural societies. First students examine maps to identify the

environmental factors, such as climate, topography, and flood patterns, that caused these civilizations to rise up along rivers. The teacher might use either of the California EEI Curriculum Units 6.2.1.River Systems and Ancient Peoples, or 6.2.2 Advances in Ancient Civilizations. These lessons emphasize environmental causes and effects and the influence that the rise of civilization along these rivers had on the organization, economies, and belief systems of Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Teachers guide students through the development of each of these three civilizations separately, while frequently pointing out connections, similarities, and differences among the civilizations (and also the Harappa civilization along the Indus River and Chinese civilization along the Huang He [Yellow] River). The following section discusses Mesopotamia first, followed by Egypt, and then by Kush.

In the third millennium BCE, Mesopotamia was divided into a number of kingdoms. Beginning in Sumer, the region of southern Mesopotamia, those early kingdoms were dominated by large walled cities, each enclosing a royal palace and a temple dedicated to the local god, along with densely packed housing for the population. Walls were built around many of these cities in response to aggression by neighboring kingdoms and competing warlords seeking to expand their territory through conquest. By around 3,000 BCE, a second cluster of cities arose in northern Mesopotamia and the area of modern-day Syria. Rulers of these cities claimed to possess authority divinely bestowed by their city's god or goddess. The city-states of Mesopotamia frequently fought one another over

resources, but they also formed alliances. At the end of the third millennium, Sargon of Akkad (2270-2215 BCE) managed briefly to forge a unified empire through conquest.

Students also examine the connections between Mesopotamia and other areas with this question: **From 4000 BCE to 500 BCE, how did contact, trade, and other links grow among the urban societies of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Kush, India, and the eastern Mediterranean?** Trade was extensive, not only among the Mesopotamian kingdoms, but also between Mesopotamia and surrounding regions. The land had rich soil that produced abundant crops, but it had no minerals. Merchants imported a red stone called carnelian from the Indus Valley, a blue stone called lapis lazuli from what is now Afghanistan, and silver from Anatolia (modern Turkey), which were used for jewelry and decorations in temples and palaces. From the Elamites on the Iranian plateau, merchants imported wood, copper, lead, silver, and tin. In some periods, trade and diplomatic exchanges took place between Mesopotamia and Egypt. Teachers introduce students to Mesopotamia's numerous technological and social innovations, including the wheel, the wooden plow, the seed drill, and improved bronze metallurgy, as well as advances in mathematics, astronomical measurement, and law. Essential for the functioning of the legal system and of the administrative structure of Mesopotamian kingdoms was the cuneiform writing system. The signs were written on clay tablets and could be used to represent phonetically many ancient languages, including Sumerian and Akkadian, the languages of Mesopotamia. Mesopotamians had a complex legal

system and written laws, of which Hammurabi's are the best preserved, though not the earliest.

Next students explore the development of Mesopotamia society with this question: **How did people's lives change as states and empires took over this area?** In the Mesopotamian cities and states, a small elite group of political leaders (officials, warriors, "nobles") and priests held the most wealth and power, while the majority of people remained poor farmers, artisans, or slaves. Supported by the elites, kings established dynasties, and built large palaces. Social groups were increasingly divided into a true social hierarchy. Mesopotamia was a patriarchy and men had more power than women. However, priestesses and noblewomen did have some access to power. For example, Sargon placed his daughter in the powerful position of high priestess of the moon god, starting a tradition that continued in the reigns of subsequent kings. Monarchs' wives sometimes controlled their own estates. In the Mesopotamian cities (and in all civilizations) the increase in social differences was a dramatic change for humans.

Grade Six Classroom Example: Hammurabi's Code
To build student understanding of how human life changed in these early civilizations, Mrs. Stanton organizes a close reading of excerpts from Hammurabi's laws. Knowing that the text will be challenging for English Learners, she identifies the key passages in the text, the unfamiliar names, the academic vocabulary, and the literacy challenges that students will face. After putting

students in groups of four, Mrs. Stanton distributes excerpted texts containing the first sentence of Hammurabi’s prologue and the first six phrases of the second sentence (for all groups) and sets of six laws (different selections for each group which all show differentiated punishments for different classes of people.) Mrs. Stanton then explains that students will be analyzing this primary source to gather evidence to answer the question: **How did people’s lives change under the rule of Hammurabi and the civilization in Mesopotamia?** She reminds students of the egalitarian life of the hunter-gatherers and limited hierarchy of villages. The students read their texts silently first and then discuss in their groups: **What is this text about? What crimes do the laws punish?** For the second reading, Mrs. Stanton guides students through a sentence deconstruction chart of the first sentence, followed by a whole class discussion of Hammurabi’s claims to divine authority as a protector of the people. For the third reading, the students mark up the text and write annotations in the margins. The teacher then models the structure of a social hierarchy pyramid on the board. For the fourth reading, each group analyzes their selection of laws, identifies the social groups, draws a social hierarchy diagram of those groups, and reports to the class orally and in writing. After class discussion, students answer text-dependent questions in a fifth reading. The students then write a summary paragraph about Hammurabi’s Laws, using the words: monarch, prince, rule, Babylon, Marduk, conquered, righteousness, and social hierarchy.

CA HSS Standards: 6.2.4

CA HSS Analysis Skills (6–8): Research, Evidence, and Point of View 3,
Historical Interpretation 1

CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy: RI.6.3, RI.6.10, SL.6.1, SL.6.4, L.6.4, RH.6–8.1,
RH.6–8.2, RH.6–8.4, WHST.6–8.2, WHST.6–8.9

CA ELD Standards: ELD.PI.6.1, 2, 6, 11; ELD.PII.6.1

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474 Next students look at how the states and empires in Mesopotamia changed
475 over time, focused on this question: **How did civilizations, complex urban**
476 **societies, develop in Mesopotamia?** Over the centuries, the cities of
477 Mesopotamia were divided into multiple states, conquered by invaders, and
478 combined into new states. While it is not possible or desirable to teach all the
479 states and groups that ruled over Mesopotamia, it is critical that students
480 understand the importance of the Persian Empire. The names of the empire
481 changed often with changes in the ruling groups (Achaemenids, Seleucids,
482 Parthians, Sasanians), but the Persian Empire maintained its continuity and its
483 domination over Mesopotamia, Persia, and often wide areas of southwestern
484 Asia and Egypt, from c. 500 BCE to c. 630 CE. It was the primary political and
485 cultural presence in western Asia during that period. Because the Persians
486 fought wars with the ancient Greeks, Greek writers often criticized the Persians.
487 However, the Persian ruled over a very large empire, from the Aegean Sea to the
488 Indus River, with policies of multicultural tolerance. After conquest by Alexander
489 the Great, Persia became a Hellenistic state under the Seleucids until the
490 Parthians conquered the area. The Parthians nevertheless maintained some

Hellenistic features and trade and diplomatic connections with other Hellenistic states from Carthage to Bactria. Parthian Persia was the main rival of the Roman Empire in the eastern Mediterranean. The Sasanians, who took over in 224 CE, actively promoted Persian nationalism and Zoroastrianism as a state religion. As the main heir of Mesopotamian civilization, the Persian Empire played as large a role in world history as the Greeks or Romans.

Teachers point out that Mesopotamia and Egypt (as well as many other early states) were dominated by a combination of religion and kingship. As they study Egypt, students focus on the question: **How did civilizations, complex urban societies, develop in Egypt?** They learn that from 3000 to 1500, unlike Mesopotamia, Egypt was usually united under a single king. Egyptian kings claimed not only to have divine approval but to be deities themselves. The Egyptians built immense pyramid tombs and grand temples for their rulers.

Teachers focus students' attention on the social and political power structures with this question: **How did people's lives change as states and empires took over this area?** The Egyptians prized order (*ma'at*) in all aspects of life, including social rules and even careful preparations for the afterlife. Their social hierarchy was an elaborate structure dominated by small elite groups of political leaders (regional lords, officials, and warriors) and priests. The teacher points out the similarity to Mesopotamia. Students analyze the Egyptian writing system in comparison with Mesopotamian cuneiform. Both used a combination of signs that represented sounds (phonemes) and ones that signified word or phrase

meanings (logograms). The Egyptians, however, used hieroglyphs and papyrus and stone as writing surfaces rather than clay tablets.

Around 1500 BCE, Egypt entered the era known as the New Kingdom. Kings such as Thutmose III expanded the Egyptian empire far up the Nile River into what is now Sudan, and into the Levant, that is, the coastal region at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. Teachers highlight Queen Hatshepsut (ca. 1479-1458 BCE) and King Ramses II, also known as Ramses the Great (1279-1212 BCE). During Hatshepsut's reign, as throughout the whole New Kingdom, Egyptian art and architecture flourished, and trade with distant lands brought enormous wealth into Egypt. Ramses II's long reign was a time of great prosperity. He fought battles to maintain the Egyptian Empire and built innumerable temples and monuments throughout Egypt. Students can analyze artistic representations of Hatshepsut, Ramses, and other pharaohs to make interpretations about the divine authority of the pharaoh (how artists represented their power, what qualities a pharaoh should have, and how Egyptian pharaohs were similar to and different from Hammurabi.) After the New Kingdom period, different empires, such as Kush, Persia, and Rome, took over Egypt.

Egypt held long trade connections in Eurasia and Africa. Teachers return to question: **From 4000 BCE to 500 BCE, how did contact, trade, and other links grow among the urban societies of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Kush, India, and the eastern Mediterranean?** Representatives of the king sailed up the Nile to Kush and penetrated the Red Sea coasts to obtain incense, ivory, and ebony wood. To the northeast, they acquired timber from the forests of Lebanon. New

Kingdom pharaohs also nurtured ties through treaties and marriage with Middle Eastern states, notably Babylonia (in Mesopotamia), Mittani (in Syria), and the kingdom of the Hittites in Anatolia. Diplomatic envoys and luxury goods circulated among these royal courts, so that they formed the world's first international community of states. Students may create maps showing the trade routes and products that circulated among Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria, Anatolia, Persia, and South Asia, as well as in the eastern Mediterranean. Students recognize that the number of states and the intensity of trade connections increased steadily from 1500 BCE to 300 CE.

The teacher transitions to the study of African civilization of Kush with this question: **What environmental factors helped the Kush civilization grow? What impact did civilizations and complex urban societies have on the surrounding environment?** Kush lay in the upper Nile Valley, where rainfall was higher and where farm and cattle land stretched far beyond the banks of the river. Kush had complex relations with Egypt. In some periods, Egyptian pharaohs dominated Kush, taxing the population and extracting goods, particularly gold. After the New Kingdom faded, Kush reasserted its independence, though maintaining close contacts with Egypt. Next students explore the question: **From 4000 BCE to 500 BCE, how did contact, trade, and other links grow among the urban societies of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Kush, India, and the eastern Mediterranean?** Teachers may introduce comparisons between the societies of Kush and Egypt through pictorial representations of the two architectural traditions. For example, kings of Kush

built pyramids, although they were smaller than Egypt’s structures. In the first millennium BCE, however, Kush developed a distinctive cultural style that included painted pottery, the elephant as an artistic motif, an alphabetic writing system, and a flourishing iron industry. The similarities between Egypt and Kush, and the distinct features of each civilization, offer an opportunity for students to analyze how one culture adopts products, styles, and ideas from another culture, but adapts those borrowings to fit its own needs and preferences. Another way to compare these civilizations is to have students trace how popular goods traded in the Egyptian world were related to the natural resources available in Egypt and Kush. They learn that Egyptian trade influenced the development of laws, policies, and incentives on the use and management of ecosystem goods and services in the eastern Mediterranean and Nile Valley, which had the long-term effects on the functioning and health of those ecosystems, through California EEI Curriculum Units 6.2.6/8, “Egypt and Kush: A Tale of Two Kingdoms.”

In the eighth century BCE, Kush’s ruler took advantage of political weakness in Egypt to conquer it, uniting a huge stretch of the Nile Valley under the twenty-fifth dynasty for nearly a century. Mapping the trade of Kush merchants with the Arabian Peninsula, India, and equatorial Africa shows students how networks of trade expanded to more and more areas. The Kush state did not seriously decline until the fourth century CE.

The Ancient Israelites (Hebrews)

- What were the beliefs and religious practices of the ancient Israelites?

How did the religious practices of Judaism change and develop over time?

- How did the environment, the history of the Israelites, and their interactions with other societies shape their religion?

- How did early Judaism support individuals, rulers, and societies?

The ancient Israelites, also known as the Hebrew people, emerged in the eastern Mediterranean coastal region about the twelfth century BCE. To begin the unit, the teacher introduces this question: **How did the environment, the history of the Israelites, and their interactions with other societies shape their religion?** Originally a semi-nomadic pastoral people living on the Mesopotamian periphery, by the eleventh century BCE they organized the kingdom of Israel. Founding a capital in the city of Jerusalem, they terraced the hillsides in their land and built up an agricultural economy. While their state did not long survive, their religion, which became known as Judaism, made an enduring contribution of morality and ethics to Western civilization.

In their study of Judaism as a monotheistic religion, students also have the opportunity to analyze how the religion changed over time. Students focus on the questions: **What were the beliefs and religious practices of the ancient Israelites? How did the religious practices of Judaism change and develop over time?** While many of main teachings of Judaism, such as a weekly day of rest, observance of law, practice of righteousness and compassion, and belief in one God, originated in the early traditions of the Jews, other early traditions

disappeared over time to be replaced by increased emphasis on morality and commitment to study. The teacher poses this historical investigation question to students: **How did the religious practices of Judaism change and develop over time?** as they read selected excerpts from the Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh), which Christians refer to as the Old Testament.

Judaism was heavily influenced by the environment, the history of the Israelites, and their interactions with other societies. The students return to the question: **How did the environment, the history of the Israelites, and their interactions with other societies shape their religion?** The many farming metaphors in the Torah show the pastoral/agricultural environment. The fragile position of Canaan in the Fertile Crescent between more powerful neighboring states dramatically affected the history of the Israelites. The Exodus from Egypt was an event of great significance to Jewish law and belief, especially the concept of a special relationship or covenant between the Israelites and God. After the Exodus, Saul, David, and Solomon—three successive kings who probably lived in the eleventh and tenth centuries BCE—united the land of Israel into a state. However, after Solomon’s reign, the unified kingdom split into two: Israel in the north and Judah (from which we get the words Judaism and Jews) in the south.

In addition to paying attention to change over time, the teacher asks students to consider: **How did early Judaism support individuals, rulers, and societies?** Between the tenth and six centuries BCE, Assyria and then Babylonia absorbed all of Mesopotamia, some of Anatolia, and the Levant,

including the two Jewish states, into their huge empires. The Babylonians deported many Jews to Mesopotamia, but in 539 BCE, Cyrus the Great, emperor of the new empire of Persia, allowed the exiled Jews to return home. Later their homeland was taken over by both Greek and Roman rulers. In 70 CE, the Roman army destroyed the Jews' temple in Jerusalem. As Jews lost their states and spread out into many other lands, their religious practice and community life had to adapt. During the Babylonian period, exiled Jews wrote down the sacred texts that had previously been orally transmitted. When the temple was destroyed, those texts were carried to new communities and preserved and studied by religious teachers or sages, such as Yohanan ben Zaccai in the first century CE, and passed on to younger generations. Many Jews left Canaan, dispersing to lands throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe. They carried with them the beliefs, traditions, and laws that served them in constituting new social and economic communities in many lands.

Ancient Greece

- How did the environment of the Greek peninsula and islands, the Anatolian coast, and the surrounding seas affect the development of Greek societies?
- What were the differences in point of view and perspective between the Persians and the Greeks, and between Athenians and Spartans?
- What were the political forms adopted by Greek urban societies? What were the achievements and limitations of Athenian democracy?

- How did Greek thought (a cultural package of mythology, humanistic art, emphasis on reason and intellectual development, and historical, scientific and literary forms) support individuals, states, and societies?
- How did Greek trade, travel, and colonies, followed by the conquests of Alexander the Great and the spread of Hellenistic culture, affect increasing connections among regions in Afroeurasia?

In this unit students learn about the ancient Greek world, which was centered on the Aegean Sea, including both the Greek peninsula and the west coast of Anatolia (modern Turkey). They begin with the question: **How did the environment of the Greek peninsula and islands, the Anatolian coast, and the surrounding seas affect the development of Greek societies?** An elongated coastline and numerous islands stimulated seaborne trade, as well as easy communication between one community and another. The peninsula's interior of mountains and deep valleys, by contrast, encouraged the independence of small communities and city-states, rather than a unified empire. Several waves of migration through the area brought significant changes to the population and culture. Greeks were oriented toward the sea, dependent on trade to feed themselves, and willing to move and settle colonies.

The ancient Greek world developed on the periphery of the Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations. Greek foundations were laid by the Minoan civilization on Crete and the Mycenaeans on the Greek peninsula. In the eighth century BCE, Greek-speaking people began a major expansion. They developed more productive agriculture, traded olive oil and wine to distant ports, and

founded colonies around the Black Sea, on the northern African coast, and in Sicily and southern Italy. These developments contributed to an increasing sense of shared Greek identity, as well as interchange of ideas and goods with Egyptians, Phoenicians, and other neighboring peoples. Around 800 BCE, the Greek language was written down, and shortly afterwards, Homer wrote the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, two foundational epic poems, which shed light on the Mycenaean world of fearless warriors who valued public competition and individual glory.

Next teachers introduce the focus question: **What were the differences in point of view and perspective between the Persians and the Greeks?** The Greek city-states engaged in a pivotal conflict with the Persian (Achaemenid) Empire in the fifth century BCE, and Greek identification of the Persians as their enemies has heavily influenced later European and American perceptions. The Persian Achaemenid Empire was centered in present-day Iran and had conquered Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, and Anatolia. Its rulers represented themselves as agents of Ahuramazda, the supreme god in the regionally important religion of Zoroastrianism. The Persians subjugated the Greek city-states of western Anatolia, but they failed in three attempts to invade the Greek peninsula and defeat the Greeks, including those in the cities of Athens and Sparta, the most powerful city-states. Herodotus (ca 484-425 BCE) was a Greek scholar who wrote a vivid narrative of these events in *The Persian Wars*, the first history book. The clear distinction between the Greeks and Persians and the continuing influence of Greek sources (rather than a balance between Greek and

Persian sources) gives the teacher a good opportunity to teach students about point of view or perspective. Students can use images of the palace art at Persepolis, particularly the tribute bearers staircase, to see the differences between the ways the Greeks represented the Persians and the Persians represented themselves.

Because the Greeks experimented with so many different forms of government and wrote so much about politics, this is the ideal point for teachers to focus on government types and citizenship, with the questions: **What were the political forms adopted by Greek urban societies? What were the achievements and limitations of Athenian democracy?** In contrast to large empires such as the Persian Achaemenids, the Greeks organized the city-state, or *polis*, with central government authority, control of surrounding farmland, and the concept of citizenship. In most city-states, the earliest rulers were wealthy aristocrats, but they were eventually replaced by tyrants, or personal dictators, and later by oligarchies, that is, small groups of privileged males. A major exception to this pattern was Athens, where a series of reforms in the sixth century broadened the base of civic participation and paved the way for a limited democratic system in the following century. In political and cultural terms, Athens in the fifth century BCE was a highly innovative city. Students may compare its system of direct democracy with modern representative democracy. In Athens, every adult male citizen could vote on legislation, and citizens were chosen for key offices by lot. These principles ensured that decision-making lay mostly in the hands of average citizens. Students may analyze the advantages and limits

of this system. For example, women, foreigners, and slaves were excluded from all political participation. In contrast to democratic Athens, Sparta was nearly the equivalent of a permanent army base, its male citizens obligated to full-time military training and rigorous discipline. To investigate the question: **What were the differences in point of view and perspective between Athenians and Spartans?** students use short quotations from Xenophon's writing about the Spartans (about the training of boys and girls) to contrast with short quotations from *Pericles's Funeral Oration*, recorded by Thucydides (from the first four sentences of the third paragraph which address Athenian democracy and self-image, and the fifth paragraph, which contrasts Athenian and Spartan military training.) Since the sentences in these sources are long and complex, the teacher has students underline the subjects, circle the verbs, and draw boxes around the complements or objects of the sentence, points out parallel phrases and clauses, and guides students through identifying references. After this literacy activity, the teacher guides students through identifying the perspectives of Xenophon and Pericles. While Xenophon was an Athenian who greatly admired the Spartans, Pericles was the leader of Athens in the Peloponnesian War against Sparta (431-404 BCE). His funeral oration was propaganda designed to build Athenian morale and support for the war. The teacher then divides the students into groups, and assigns them text-dependent questions. For each of primary sources, students write out a statement of the author's perspective and one piece of evidence in the text (such as a loaded word or a statement that favors one side).

Students can also compare the economic systems of Athens and Sparta. Because of their lack of natural resources (infertile soil and rough terrain), neither city-state was able to produce enough food to feed their growing populations. Athens, however, had vast amounts of silver and relied on trade to obtain food for its citizens, while Sparta relied on conquest and slave labor in the conquered territories to obtain its food. ~~Fighting between Greek~~ city-states was chronic and destructive. Athens at that time ruled large areas of the Aegean basin, but Sparta's victory in the Peloponnesian War brought the Athenian empire to an end. It also ended the classical age of Greece. Conflicts among the city-states contributed to the military conquest of Greece by Philip II of Macedonia.

The cultural achievements of the classical Greeks were numerous. Teachers have students consider the question: **How did Greek thought (a cultural package of mythology, humanistic art, emphasis on reason and intellectual development, and historical, scientific and literary forms) support individuals, states, and societies?** Athens produced several philosophers (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle), historians (Herodotus, Thucydides), and orators (Demosthenes, Pericles). It also nurtured drama, both tragedy (Sophocles, Euripides) and comedy (Aristophanes). The Greek art and architecture of the era emphasized naturalistic representations of human forms and buildings of beautiful proportions. The rich tales of Greek mythology influenced all forms of literature and art. Students may consider examples of ways in which Greek culture has had an enduring influence on modern society.

Next students investigate how Greek culture spread in the Hellenistic era, with the question: **How did Greek trade, travel, and colonies, followed by the conquests of Alexander the Great and the spread of Hellenistic culture, affect increasing connections among regions in Afroeurasia?** Philip II's son Alexander of Macedonia (ruled 336-323) led a military campaign of unprecedented scope, conquering the Persian Empire, Egypt, Central Asia, and even to the Indus River valley. Following his death, his generals and their sons carved his short-lived empire into separate states. The following two centuries are known as the Hellenistic period. "Hellenistic" refers to the influence of Greek cultural forms in regions far beyond the Aegean, though in fact a lively interchange of products and ideas took place in the broad region from the Mediterranean to India. Athenian democracy did not survive, but Greek ideas, such as language, sculpture, and city planning, mingled creatively with the cultural styles of Egypt, Persia, and India. For example, the Egyptian goddess Isis took on a Greek-like identity and came to be venerated widely in the Hellenistic lands. The era also brought innovations in science and mathematics, for example, the principles of geometry came from Euclid, who lived in the Hellenistic Egyptian city of Alexandria. During the Hellenistic period, exchanges of products, ideas, and technologies across Afroeurasia increased greatly and penetrated into many more regions, culminating with connections to China via the Silk Road. Cosmopolitan Hellenistic cities became sites of encounter for people of different cultures, religions, and regions. Eventually, the Hellenistic

kingdoms west of Persia succumbed to the greater military power of Rome,
which in turn absorbed many aspects of Greek culture.

The Early Civilizations of India

- How did the environment influence the emergence and decline of the Harappa civilization?
- How did the religion of Hinduism support individuals, rulers, and societies?
- How did the religion of Buddhism support individuals, rulers, and societies?
- During the Harappa civilization, the Vedic period, and the Maurya Empire, how did the connections between India and other regions of Afroeurasia increase?

In this unit students learn about ancient societies in India. They begin with the environment: **How did the environment influence the emergence and decline of the Harappa civilization?** The earliest civilization, known as Harappan civilization after one of its cities, was centered in the Indus River valley, though its cultural style spread widely from present-day Afghanistan to the upper Ganga plain (Ganges River). The Indus River and its tributaries, along with Saraswati (or Sarasvati) River, flow from the Himalaya mountains southward across the plain now called the Punjab, fan out into a delta, and pour into the Arabian Sea. The river valley was much larger than either Mesopotamia or Egypt, and its soil was very rich. Lessons two and four of the California EEI Curriculum Unit 6.5.1, “The Rivers and Ancient Empires of China and India,” have students locate and

809 describe the physical features of the Indus and Ganges river systems in India.

810 Investigating regional seasonal cycles, especially the summer monsoons,

811 students provide examples of how these cycles benefitted the permanent

812 settlement of early Indian civilization, helping them to recognize that humans

813 depend on, benefit from, and can alter the cycles that occur in the natural

814 systems where they live.

815 Arising in the third millennium BCE, the Harappan civilization attained its

816 zenith between about 2600 and 1900 BCE. It was discovered by archaeologists

817 in the 1920s. Digs have revealed that many Harappan cities, including Harappa

818 and Mohenjo-daro, were well planned with streets laid out in grids and well-

819 engineered sewers. Artifacts include pottery, seals, statues, jewelry, tools, and

820 toys. The seals contain writing that has not yet been deciphered. Some of the

821 statues and figurines, as well as images on the seals, show features that are all

822 present in modern Hinduism, such as a male figure that resembles the Hindu

823 God Shiva in a meditating posture, as well as small clay figures in the posture of

824 the traditional Hindu greeting “namaste.” Evidence reveals active commerce

825 between the cities of the Harappan civilization as well as foreign trade with

826 Mesopotamia by sea. A flourishing urban civilization developed in India from as

827 early as 3300 BCE along the Indus River. Archaeologists believe this civilization

828 had its greatest stage of expansion from 2600 - 1700 BCE. The economic basis

829 of the civilization was surplus agriculture, though the cities of Mohenjo-daro and

830 Harappa carried on extensive trade. The Harappan civilization steadily declined

831 after 1900 BCE, perhaps owing to ecological factors such as seismic events,

deforestation, salt buildup in the soil, and persistent drought, including the drying up of the Sarasvati River around 2000 BCE.

Indian history then entered the Vedic period (ca. 1500-500 BCE), an era named for the *Vedas*, Sanskrit religious texts passed on for generations through a complex oral tradition. In that period, according to many scholars, people speaking Indic languages, which are part of the larger Indo-European family of languages, entered South Asia, probably by way of Iran. Gradually, Indic languages, including Sanskrit, spread across northern India. They included the ancestors of such modern languages as Hindi, Urdu, and Bengali. The early Indic speakers were most likely animal herders. They may have arrived in India in scattered bands, later intermarrying with populations perhaps ancestral to those who speak Dravidian languages, such as Tamil and Telugu in southern India and Sri Lanka today. In the same era, nomads who spoke Indo-Iranian languages moved into Persia. Indic, Iranian, and most European languages are related. There is another point of view that suggests that the language was indigenous to India and spread northward, but it is a minority position.

Later in the Vedic period, new royal and commercial towns arose along the Ganges (aka Ganga), India's second great river system. In this era, Vedic culture emerged as a belief system that combined the beliefs of Indic speakers with those of older populations. Teachers focus students on the question: **How did the religion of Hinduism support individuals, rulers, and societies?** Brahmins, that is, priestly families, assumed authority over complex devotional rituals, but many important sages, such as Valmiki and Vyasa, were not

855 brahmins. Ancient Hindu sages (brahmins and others) expounded the idea of the
856 oneness of all living things and of Brahman as the divine principle of being. The
857 Hindu tradition is thus monistic, the idea of reality being a unitary whole.
858 Brahman, an all-pervading divine supreme reality, may be manifested in many
859 ways, including incarnation in the form of Deities. These Deities are worshipped
860 as distinct personal Gods or Goddesses, such as Vishnu who preserves the
861 world, Shiva who transforms it, and Sarasvati, the Goddess of learning. Vedic
862 teachings gradually built up a rich body of spiritual and moral teachings that
863 formed the foundation of Hinduism as it is practiced today. These teachings were
864 transmitted orally at first, and then later in written texts, the *Upanishads* and,
865 later, the *Bhagavad Gita*. Performance of duties and ceremonies, along with
866 devotion and meditation, became dimensions of the supreme quest to achieve
867 oneness with God. That fulfillment, however, demands obedience to the moral
868 law of the universe, called dharma, which also refers to performance of social
869 duties. Dharma consists of natural, universal laws that underlie every person's
870 duty towards themselves, their family, their community and nation. Success or
871 failure at existing in harmony with dharma determines how many times an
872 individual might be subject to reincarnation, or repeated death and rebirth at
873 either lower or higher positions of moral and ritual purity. Progress toward
874 spiritual realization is governed by karma, the principle of cause and effect by
875 which human actions, good and bad, affect this and future lives. Many of the
876 central practices of Hinduism today, including home and temple worship, yoga
877 and meditation, rites of passage (samskaras), festivals, pilgrimage, respect for

878 saints and gurus, and, above all, a profound acceptance of religious diversity,
879 developed over this period.

880 As in all early civilizations, Indian society witnessed the development of a
881 system of social classes. Ancient Indian society formed into self-governing
882 groups, jatis, that emphasized birth as the defining criteria. Jatis initially shared
883 the same occupation and married only within the group. This system, often
884 termed caste, provided social stability and gave an identity to each community.
885 The *Vedas* also describe four main social categories, known as varnas, namely:
886 Brahmins (priests); Kshatriyas (kings and warriors); Vaishyas (merchants,
887 artisans, and farmers) and Sudras (peasants and laborers). A person belonged
888 to a particular varna by his professional excellence and his good conduct, not by
889 birth itself. In addition, by 500 CE or earlier, there existed certain communities
890 outside the jati system, the “Untouchables,” who did the most unclean work, such
891 as cremation, disposal of dead animals, and sanitation.

892 Relations between classes came to be expressed in terms of ritual purity or
893 impurity, higher classes being purer than lower ones. This class system became
894 distinctive over the centuries for being especially complex and formal, involving
895 numerous customs and prohibitions on eating together and intermarrying that
896 kept social and occupational groups distinct from one another in daily life. Over
897 the centuries, the Indian social structure became more rigid, though perhaps not
898 more inflexible than the class divisions in other ancient civilizations. When
899 Europeans began to visit India in modern times, they used the word “caste” to
900 characterize the social system because of the sharp separation they perceived

between groups who did not intermarry and thus did not mix with each other. Caste, however, is a term that social scientists use to describe any particularly unbending social structure, for example, slave-holding society in the American south before the Civil War, which can make the “caste” label offensive. Today many Hindus, in India and in the United States, do not identify themselves as belonging to a caste. Teachers should make clear to students that this was a social, [political, economics](#), and cultural structure rather than a religious belief. As in Mesopotamia and Egypt, priests, rulers, and other elites used religion to justify the social hierarchy. Although ancient India was a patriarchy, women had a right to their personal wealth, especially jewelry, gold, and silver, but fewer property rights than men. They participated equally with their husbands in religious ceremonies and festival celebrations. Hinduism is the only major religion in which God is worshipped in female as well as male form. [Because it determined people’s occupations and economic relationships the caste system allocated resources, controlled markets and distributed wealth in a way different than the more entrepreneurial Babylonian and Persian system.](#)

One text Hindus rely on for solutions to moral dilemmas is the *Ramayana*, the story of Rama, an incarnation or avatar of Vishnu, who goes through many struggles and adventures as he is exiled from his father’s kingdom and has to fight a demonic enemy, Ravana. Rama, his wife Sita, and some other characters are challenged by critical moral decisions in this epic work. The teacher might select the scene in which Rama accepts his exile, or the crisis over the broken

promise of Sugriva, the monkey king, and then ask students: **What is the moral dilemma here? What is the character's dharma?** In this way, students can deepen their understanding of Hinduism as they are immersed in one of ancient India's most important literary and religious texts.

Students now turn to the question: **How did the religion of Buddhism support individuals, rulers, and societies?** Buddhism emerged in the sixth century BCE in the moral teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, the "Buddha". Through the story of his life, his Hindu background, and his search for enlightenment, students may learn about his fundamental ideas: suffering, compassion, and mindfulness. Buddhism waned in India in the late first millennium CE as the result of a resurgence of Hindu tradition. Buddhist monks, nuns, and merchants, however, carried their religion to Sri Lanka (Ceylon), Central Asia, China, and Southeast Asia, where many people continue to follow it today. In India, through the teachings of Mahavira, Jainism, a religion that embraced the dharmic idea of ahimsa, or nonviolence, paralleled the rise of Buddhism. It has continued to play a role in modern India, notably in Mohandas Gandhi's ideas of nonviolent disobedience.

In the late fourth century BCE Chandragupta Maurya unified most of India through conquest and diplomacy and established the Maurya Empire. Teachers pose the question: **During the the Maurya Empire, how did the connections between India and other regions of Afroeurasia increase?** Governing a powerful empire with a million-man army, the Maurya dynasty maintained strong diplomatic and trade connections to the Hellenistic states to the west. The

Maurya Empire reached its peak under the rule of Chandragupta's grandson Ashoka (268-232). Beginning his reign with military campaigns, he had a strong change of heart, converted to Buddhism, and devoted the rest of his rule to promoting nonviolence, family harmony, and tolerance among his subjects. The Maurya Empire broke up into small states in the early second century BCE.

The Early Civilizations of China

- How did the environment influence the development of civilization in China?
- What factors helped China unify into a single state under the Han Dynasty? What social customs and government policies made the centralized state so powerful?
- How did the philosophical system of Confucianism support individuals, rulers, and societies?
- How did the establishment of the Silk Road increase trade, the spread of Buddhism, and the connections between China and other regions of Afroeurasia?

In this unit students study early Chinese civilization, that emerged first in the Huang He (Yellow) River valley with the Shang dynasty (ca.1750-1040 BCE) and later spread south to the Yangzi River area. Students begin their study with the question: **How did the environment influence the development of civilization in China?** The Huang He could be a capricious river, exposing populations to catastrophic floods. On the other hand, farmers supported dense populations and

early cities by cultivating the valley’s loess, that is, the light, fertile soil that yielded bountiful grain crops. Through lesson five of California EEI Curriculum Unit, “The Rivers and Ancient Empires of China and India,” students learn about the importance of ecosystem goods and services to the early Chinese. Humans and human communities benefit from the dynamic nature of rivers and streams in ways that are essential to human life and to the functioning of our economies and cultures. Building on its agriculture and natural resources, the Shang society made key advances in bronze-working and written language. Some of the evidence about the Shang comes from “oracle bones,” that is, records of divination inscribed on animal bones. The script on the oracle bones is the direct ancestor of modern Chinese characters, a logographic script that differs from the alphabetic systems that developed in other parts of the world.

The Zhou dynasty (1122-256 BCE), the longest lasting in China’s history, grew much larger than the Shang by subjecting local princes and chiefs of outlying territories to imperial authority. By the eighth century BCE, however, many of these subordinate officers built up their own power bases and pulled away from the center, partly by perfecting iron technology to make armaments. The Zhou gradually weakened, plunging China into a long period of political instability and dislocation, especially during the Warring States Period, which lasted nearly two centuries.

In those times of trouble, the scholar Confucius (551-479 BCE) lived and wrote. His teachings were the basis of the philosophical system of Confucianism which had a major influence on the development of Chinese government and

993 society. Students focus on the question: **How did the philosophical system of**
994 **Confucianism support individuals, rulers, and societies?** He tried to make
995 sense of the disrupted world he saw, and he proposed ways for individuals and
996 society to achieve order and goodness. By examining selections from the
997 *Analects*, or “sayings” of Confucius, students learn that, as with Socrates and
998 Jesus, his ideas were written down by others at a later time. In Confucian
999 teachings, which were elaborated by other scholars in later centuries, good
1000 people practice moderation in conduct and emotion, keep their promises, honor
1001 traditional ways, respect elders, and improve themselves through education.
1002 Confucius emphasized ritual, filial piety and respect for social hierarchy, and
1003 promoted the dignity and authenticity of humanity. He encouraged the most
1004 educated, talented, and moral men to serve the state by becoming scholar-
1005 officials, which later made the government of China stronger. He also, however,
1006 instructed women to play entirely subordinate roles to husbands, fathers, and
1007 brothers, though some educated Chinese women produced Confucian literary
1008 works.

Grade Six Classroom Example: The Impact of Confucianism
In order to help her students understand the social impact of Confucianism, Ms. Aquino asks them to read “Selections from the Confucian Analects,” available on the Asia for Educators website from Columbia University in short excerpts with DBQ questions by topic. Specifically, she has students read and analyze Analects 1.2, 4.16, and 12.2, on filial piety and humaneness, excerpts

from the *Classic of Filiality*, and Ban Zhao's *Admonitions for Women* (the first three paragraphs) written by a woman during the Han dynasty, all on the Asia for Educators website from Columbia University.

Ms. Aquino first introduces the sources and explains the purpose of the reading is to help answer the question: **How did the philosophical system of Confucianism support individuals, rulers, and societies?** Students undertake close readings of each document one at a time. They attempt the first reading alone.

In the second reading, Ms. Aquino provides sentence deconstruction charts to show students the cause-and-effect structure of the compound sentences of these texts. As her students are reading, Ms. Aquino clarifies that “humaneness” refers both to good individual behavior and social order. Ms. Aquino then asks student pairs to discuss: **What is the relationship between individual good behavior and social order (or the greater good of society)?** Each pair writes down their answer and cites one piece of evidence from the reading to support their answer. Ms. Aquino then has pairs of students share out their answers and evidence, and points out that to Confucius nothing was more important to social order than the good behavior of all individuals.

In the third reading, students mark up the text, underline the positive things that a person should do or be, circle the negative things that a person should not do or be, and draw a box around any words they don't understand. After students have gone through the first two texts, Ms. Aquino asks students to share out the

words that they have underlined while the teacher records those words on the board under the title “Men.” Then she explains that the final text, Ban Zhao’s *Admonitions*, was written by a woman for an audience of women, unlike the first two texts, which were written by men mostly for an audience of men. Students do the above close readings with the Ban Zhao text, and the teacher records the positive attributes they have underlined on the board under the title “Women.” Next student groups fill out a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the positive features for men and those for women. As a group, they decide which are the most important similarities and differences, and write a group claim to answer the question: How was the Confucian ideal behavior different for men and women?

To help English learners with academic vocabulary, Ms. Aquino gives them sentence starters as a model, such as “While under Confucianism men were supposed to _____ and women were supposed to _____, both had the responsibility to _____.” and “To maintain order in society, Confucians believed that both men and women should _____, but only men had the responsibility to _____, while women _____.” Finally, each group cites and analyzes three pieces of evidence (one from each source) on an evidence analysis chart.

CA HSS Standards: 6.6.3, 6.6.4

CA HSS Analysis Skills (6–8): Research, Evidence and Point of View 5

CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy: SL.6.1, L.6.5, L.6.6, RH.6-8.1, RH.6-8.2, WHST.6-8.1, WHST.6-8.7, WHST.6-8.9

CA ELD Standards: ELD.PI.6.1, 3, 6a, 6b, 10b, 11a; ELD.PII.6.1, 6
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1009

1010 Daoism was a second important philosophical tradition begun in this early
1011 period. According to Chinese tradition, Laozi (Lao-tzu) was another sage who,
1012 lived around the same time as Confucius and developed an alternative set of
1013 teachings. Daoism emphasized simple living, shunning of ambition, harmony with
1014 nature, and the possibility of a blissful afterlife. Teachers should note that the
1015 Pinyin Romanization system (Laozi and Daoism) is now more widely used than
1016 the Wade-Giles system (Lao-tzu and Taoism) used in the standards.

1017 Next students turn to Chinese imperial government, with the questions: **What**
1018 **factors helped China unify into a single state under the Han Dynasty? What**
1019 **social customs and government policies made the centralized state so**
1020 **powerful?** China's long era of division ended when Shi Huangdi (221-210 BCE),
1021 a state-builder of great energy, unified China from the Yellow River to the Yangzi
1022 River and created the Qin dynasty. In less than a dozen years, he laid the
1023 foundations of China's powerful imperial bureaucracy. He imposed peace and
1024 regularized laws. He also severely punished anyone who defied him, including
1025 Confucian scholars, and he uprooted tens of thousands of peasant men and
1026 women to build roads, dykes, palaces, the first major phase of the Great Wall,
1027 and an enormous tomb for himself. Teachers may introduce students to the
1028 excavations of this immense mausoleum, which have yielded a veritable army of
1029 life-sized terra cotta soldiers and horses. Shi Huangdi is also well known for
1030 employing scholars to standardize and simplify the Chinese writing system,

1031 which provided the empire with a more uniform system of communication.

1032 Shi Huangdi's Qin Dynasty soon fell to the longer-lasting Han dynasty (206
1033 BCE-220 CE), which unified even more territory and placed central government
1034 in the hands of highly educated bureaucrats. Immersed in Confucian teachings,
1035 these scholar-officials promoted the idea that peace in society requires people to
1036 think and do the right thing as mapped out by tradition. Harmony in the family
1037 was seen by Confucians as the key to harmony in the world. Ethical principles
1038 should uplift the state. Rulers should govern righteously because when they do
1039 they enjoy the trust of their subjects. The benevolent ruler demonstrates that he
1040 possesses divine approval, or the "mandate of heaven," an idea that first
1041 emerged in Zhou dynasty times. But if the monarch is despotic, he risks losing
1042 that mandate, bringing misfortune on his people and justifiable rebellion.
1043 Promotion of Confucianism helped create a strong, stable government and social
1044 order in China. All educated men (from the emperor on down) were trained to
1045 serve the state and act morally for the good of the people, rather than to seek
1046 profit. The highest social rank (under the imperial family) was to be a scholar-
1047 official, rather than a warrior, priest, or merchant.

1048 In the first century CE, Han officials governed about 60 million people, the
1049 great majority of them productive farmers. Major technological advances of the
1050 era include new iron farm tools, the collar harness, the wheelbarrow, silk
1051 manufacturing, and the cast-iron plow, which cultivators used to open extensive
1052 new rice-growing lands in southern China. Han power declined in the second
1053 century CE, as regional warlords increasingly broke away from centralized

authority, leading to some 400 years of Chinese disunity. However, the ideal that China should be unified was never lost, and later dynasties modeled themselves after the Han, as they united the whole territory under one centralized state, governed by Confucian principles using scholar-officials, and tried to keep the Mandate of Heaven.

The Han Dynasty also established important connections with other cultures, as students investigate with the question: **How did the establishment of the Silk Road increase trade, the spread of Buddhism, and the connections between China and other regions of Afroeurasia?** The spread of the Han empire to the north and west, concern about nomadic raiders from the north led to seek contact with societies to the west. At the end of the second century BCE, the Han Chinese empire and the Parthian Persian empire exchanged ambassadors. Chinese ambassadors (and merchants) gave gifts of silk cloth to the Parthians, Kushans, and other Central Asian states. Quickly realizing the value of silk, merchants from Persia, the Kushan and Maurya empires, and other Central Asian states began to trade regularly with Chinese merchants. Caravans of luxury goods regularly traveled the overland trade route, “the Silk Road” (really a number of routes, trails and roads) that crossed the steppes north of the Himalayas- [ultimately reaching as far west as Rome. In addition to silk, commodities such as dates, copper, herbs, and ceramics were profitably traded along the “silk roads.”](#) Maritime commerce along the chain of seas that ran from the East China Sea to the Red Sea also developed rapidly in that era. Students outline the land and sea trade routes on a map, preferably a map of Afroeurasia,

so that they can see that connections now spread all the way across the middle of Afroeurasia, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Ideas also spread along the trade routes. In the climate of insecurity after the fall of the Han empire, missionaries began spreading Buddhism along the Silk Road to China. Students analyze the style of carvings of Buddhas and paintings from Dunhuang and Yungang which combine Indian, central Asian, and Chinese artistic influences.

The Development of Rome

- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Roman Republic? Why did the Roman Republic fall?
- How did the Romans advance the concept of citizenship?
- How did the environment influence the expansion of Rome and its integrated trade networks?
- How did other societies (the Greeks, Hellenistic states, Han China, Parthian Persia) influence and affect the Romans?

The final unit on Rome presents a challenge to teachers because it is also taught in seventh grade. The sixth-grade teacher emphasizes the development of the Roman Republic and the transition to the Roman Empire, focusing on the themes of environment, political systems and citizenship, and increasing trade and connections between societies. The teacher also uses this unit to draw together major themes from the course by comparing Rome to earlier and contemporaneous societies and provide closure to the course. The teacher begins with the influences of the Greeks and Hellenistic culture on Rome, with

this question: **How did other societies (the Greeks, Hellenistic states, Han China, Parthian Persia) influence and affect the Romans?** Originally a small farming community on the central west coast of the Italian peninsula, Rome was on the edge of the prosperous eastern Mediterranean sphere dominated by Greeks, Egyptians, and peoples of the Levant. The Roman Republic grew in the Hellenistic environment and drew on the trade, technology, and culture of the Greeks. Through military action, diplomacy, and the practice of granting citizenship to conquered peoples, the Romans were able to unite the entire coastal area around the Mediterranean into a single empire and to extend that empire into Europe. Roman culture absorbed much of the Greek and Hellenistic traditions. Rome's own innovations included the arch, concrete, technologically sophisticated road building, and a body of laws that has had immense influence on legal systems in Europe, the United States, and other parts of the world.

Students probe more deeply into Roman politics with this question: **How did the Romans advance the concept of citizenship?** Citizenship, republican institutions, and the rule of law are major Roman contributions to civics. According to Roman tradition, Vergil's *Aeneid*, and the works of the historian Livy, Romulus, a descendant of the Trojan Aeneas, founded the city in 753 BCE. Kings first ruled Rome, but a republic replaced the monarchy in 509 BCE. The Romans adopted a distinct form of democracy, based on the Athenian model, with legislative power resting not with the entire mass of citizens, but with their representatives. Even though the political system experienced many problems as Rome grew in size, Roman culture provided very stable idea of citizenship.

Whereas the ancient Greeks valued competition and individual achievement, the highest virtue to the Romans was duty to their families, to the state, and to the gods. They idealized the virtue of public service, as depicted in the story of Cincinnatus, who according to Roman sources was living on a farm when he was chosen to serve as dictator during a hostile invasion in 458 BCE. Cincinnatus gave up his power after the defeat of the enemy to return to his simple life on the farm. His selfless devotion to public service inspired later leaders such as George Washington. Just as Confucian teachings on the ideal of government service strengthened Chinese government and society, the Roman ideal of the duty of a citizen to the state gave considerable stability to the state and social order.

The legend of Cincinnatus also emphasizes that the duty of a Roman to the state was often to fight. The Roman military was large, tough, and powerful. Environmental factors also influenced Rome's expansion, which students analyze with this focus question: **How did the environment influence the expansion of Rome and its integrated trade networks?** During the Early Republic (509-264 BCE), the Romans took over the entire Italian peninsula, whose fertile valleys and coastal plains produced bountiful harvests of wheat, wine, olive oil, and wool. Rome defeated its nearby neighbors in a series of wars and partially incorporated them into the young state, which ensured a steady supply of soldiers for the growing army.

Roman society consisted of two classes: the upper class and the lower class.

The upper class was further divided into the senatorial class (senatores) and the

equestrian class (equites). The lower class consisted of commons (plebs or vulgus), Latins (Latini), foreigners (peregrini), freed people (liberti or libertini) and slaves (servi). Belonging to the upper class had significant consequences for Romans besides prestige, for social class determined one's economic and political opportunities, as well as legal rights, benefits and penalties. Rome had nothing comparable to our middle class; the gulf between these two upper classes and the much larger lower classes was immense.

Expansion around the Mediterranean rim began in the third century BCE, when Rome defeated the maritime state of Carthage in the Punic Wars. By devastating Carthage, Rome gained thousands of square miles of wheat land in Sicily and North Africa, as well as a windfall of Spanish silver. In the decades before and after the turn of the millennium, Rome also conquered the Hellenistic kingdoms of Greece and Egypt.

As Rome grew in size, the republican government that had worked for it as a small city-state became more and more overwhelmed. The teacher introduces the focus question: **What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Roman Republic? Why did the Roman Republic fall?** Rome's constitution distributed power among elected officials, the citizen body, and the oligarchic senate, but in practice decision-making lay with the senate, especially with its most influential members. One problem was that only certain elite citizens, called the patricians, had access to the senate and thus to political power. Other citizens, called the plebeians, challenged the elite patricians in violent conflicts. Plebeians finally won legal protections against patrician power and access to high political offices.

However, as the Roman army conquered the entire Mediterranean basin, massive wealth from trade and spoils, as well as large numbers of slaves, poured into Italy. This increased the divide between wealthy (senators, patricians, and some plebeians) and poor (most plebeians, conquered foreigners, and slaves) and put great strain on the Roman political system.

By the Late Republic (133-31 BCE), political competition between senators became intense and increasingly violent. A succession of ambitious generals used the loyal armies to challenge each other and, increasingly, the authority of the entire senate, which the statesman and author Cicero symbolized. This discord culminated in the dictatorship of Julius Caesar and, under his successor Augustus (31 BCE-14 CE), in the establishment of what was in essence a monarchy and a new ruling dynasty. Augustus refused the title of king and pretended to defer to the senate, but his control over Rome was complete. Rulers afterwards took the title emperor. For much of the first two centuries CE, the Roman Empire enjoyed political and territorial stability, and the provinces benefited from new roads, a standardized currency, economic growth, and peaceful conditions.

Returning to the question: **How did the Romans advance the concept of citizenship?** students evaluate the Roman Republic. The Roman republic provided a model for future democratic institutions and the development of civic culture and citizenship, in the early U.S. and other modern nations. Students consider ways in which modern writers, artists, and political leaders have appropriated Greek and Roman ideals, values, and cultural forms as worthy

models for civil society. Besides the borrowed words (senate and capitol, for example), architectural styles, and rhetorical models, later democratic states were inspired by the heroic civic models of Cincinnatus, the Horatius brothers, and Cicero, who defended the state and its republican institutions even when it was not in their self-interest. The struggle of Roman groups to widen political participation to the plebeians, to control the growing empire without allowing individuals to grow too wealthy or too powerful, and to harness the power of the military leaders to the service of the state, also offered sobering examples of how republicanism could be undermined by social conflict, individual self-interest, and military power. The teacher asks students why Romans allowed Julius and then Augustus Caesar to take over the republic. Both were successful military leaders who delivered peace after a long period of civil war. **Did the Romans give up freedom for order and peace?**

However, even after Rome became an empire, the idea of citizenship remained strong. Wealthy Romans regularly contributed their personal funds to build civic structures, fund entertainments for the general public, and improve city life. The teacher has students analyze visuals from Pompeii of dedication plaques and inscriptions that are evidence of Roman civic contributions. **Why did wealthy Romans pay for these public structures and events? What did citizenship mean to them? How did the Romans advance the concept of citizenship?** The teacher connects the Roman example to the responsibilities of students as citizens of the U.S. and to opportunities for service learning projects.

Students make a social hierarchy pyramid of Roman society and recognize that by the Late Republic, Rome had a huge population of slaves. The teacher has them compare and contrast the social hierarchy of Rome and other earlier societies. Roman fathers had power over their families and dependents. Women who were not enslaved could achieve citizenship, though with several restrictions. They could neither attend the popular assemblies that had certain legislative powers nor serve as elected magistrates. They could, however, make wills, sue for divorce, circulate openly in public, and hold certain religious offices. Also, wives and mothers in wealthy families sometimes exerted great influence on public decisions. The teacher emphasizes that all the urban societies studied in the course, like most premodern societies, were patriarchies, with small wealthy and powerful elite groups and very large poor populations who worked at farming. Unlike Han China, however, much of the farming in Rome was done by slaves.

Finally students investigate the question: **How did other societies (the Greeks, Hellenistic states, Han China, Parthian Persia) influence and affect the Romans?** Rome at its height was at the center of a web of trade routes by land and sea. Huge plantations worked by slave labor produced grain to feed the Roman cities. Uniting the diverse environments of Egypt, North Africa, Syria, Anatolia, Greece and Europe gave Romans access to vast resources. Roman roads united the empire, and trade routes by land and sea connected it with eastern Asia. Wealthy Romans dressed in silk imported from China and jewels imported from India. Students create maps of the trade routes across Afroeurasia

1237 that connected the Roman and Han empires with the Persians and Central
1238 Asians as middlemen. The teacher has student pairs examine a physical map of
1239 Afroeurasia and a map of the Roman Empire at its furthest extent. He or she
1240 asks the students to predict where the Romans would expand next. Student pairs
1241 write down a prediction and give geographical evidence to support it. This
1242 analysis shows that the Romans had actually conquered all the desirable land
1243 around them, with the exception of Persia. To the north was a cold land of forests
1244 and barbarians, to the south and southeast were deserts, to the west, the ocean.
1245 The teacher points out that this presented huge problems to Rome, which they
1246 will study in seventh grade.

1247 The Romans could not expand to the east because they could not defeat the
1248 Persian empire, first under the Parthians and then under the Sasanians. In the
1249 first century BCE, Roman attacked the Parthians from their base in Syria. This
1250 resulted in a catastrophic military defeat for Rome and confirmed the Parthian
1251 empire as Rome's chief rival for control over Mesopotamia. The Parthian and
1252 Sasanian Persian emperors promoted the religion of Zoroastrianism to
1253 strengthen the power of their state and build up a national identity. Fighting
1254 continued between the two empires along the border in a bitter conflict. However,
1255 religious ideas and trade products spread back and forth between the two
1256 enemies. Many Romans began to follow Mithraism, a religion from Persia and
1257 the east. Christianity spread back and forth across the Roman-Persian border.

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